

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

FY 2011 Manager's Report



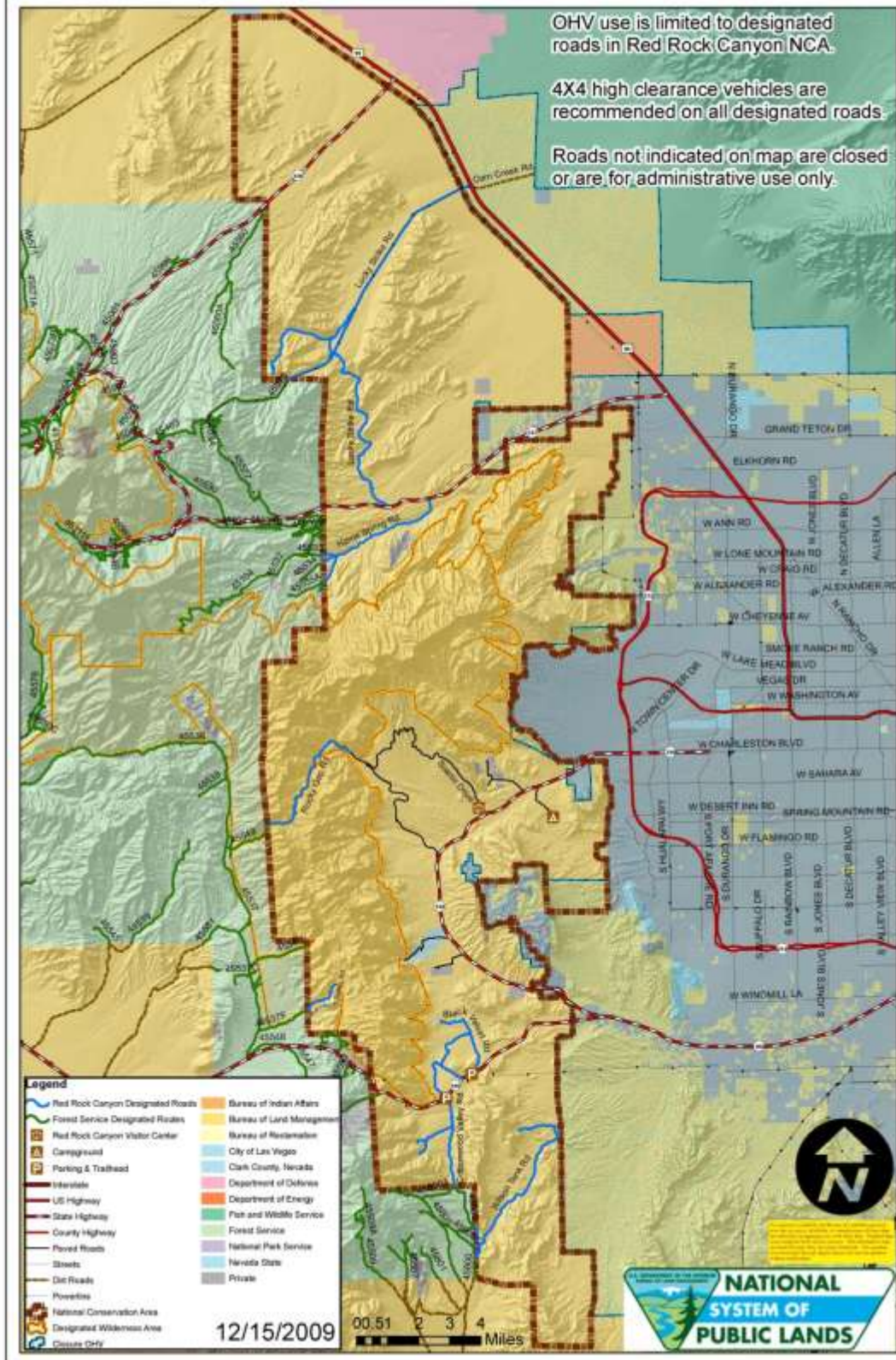
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION SYSTEM
October 1, 2010 thru September 30, 2011**

- **Unit:** Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area
Red Rock/Sloan Field Office
Southern Nevada District Office
BLM Nevada State Office
- **Contact Information:** 4701 North Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130
702 515-5000

www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo/blm_programs/blm_special_areas/red_rock_nca.html

- **Manager:** Robbie McAboy
Robbie_McAboy@blm.gov
- **Established:** Public Law 101-621, Public Law 105-26, November 16, 1990
- **Acreage:** 197,382 BLM acres
- **Annual visitation:** 1,114,134

Designated Roads in Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area



I: Natural and Heritage Resource Conditions

1. Red brome infestations continue to grow and become more prevalent prompting proposed fuel reduction actions from the Fire Management Officer. Environmental analysis has been initiated to propose treatment options along roads, trails and natural features to create a 300-foot fuel break with the hopes of minimizing the threat of large wildfires within Red Rock. The Environmental Assessment (EA) is scheduled to be finalized in early 2012. Alternatives being analyzed will consist of spraying herbicides and mechanical treatments. The selected alternative is proposed to be implemented in fall of 2012.



2. Unauthorized motorized use, illegal dumping and vandalism in areas immediately adjacent to the urban interface are still factors affecting the condition of the resources. Additional signage and law enforcement patrols are necessary to reduce the frequency of these infractions.
3. Lack of staffing has really hampered our efforts to conduct land health assessments and our ability to conduct resource inventories. The Natural Resource staff is shared with the Las Vegas and Pahrump Field Offices and we generally only utilize resource specialists for project specific work.
4. Cultural resource inventories were conducted on approximately 3,000 acres of Red Rock this fiscal year.
5. An effort to complete a site condition assessment of Red Rock is still on schedule to be completed by the end of calendar year 2012.
6. We are in the process of entering into an agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office to oversee management of the site stewardship program. The stewardship program is essential in tracking, reporting and analyzing general and specific trends at Red Rock and Sloan for documented cultural sites. This program provides for the continued recruitment and retention of volunteers and assists with promoting responsible use of federal lands through on-the-ground education of the members of the public. In FY 2011, 321 volunteers donated 3,251 hours monitoring 644 sites in Red Rock and Sloan.
7. Willow Springs is the home of the endemic Spring Mountain Springsnail and the Southeastern Nevada Springsnail. It is also one of the most highly used recreation sites along the scenic drive. Visitors continually disturb this sensitive habitat (unknowingly) simply because it is one of a few places where water can be found in Red Rock. Efforts to



protect the springsnail included developing an interpretative display to inform the public about the springsnail and simple things they can do to help protect it, installing a post and rail fence around the spring and removing picnic tables and barbeque grills that were immediately adjacent to the spring site.



Willow Springs

II: Recreation Facilities, Roads, and Trails Conditions

1. Utilizing funds acquired through the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA) and the Department of Transportation, Red Rock entered into an agreement with the Volpe Center to conduct a feasibility study to develop alternatives to address congestion issues at Red Rock along the scenic drive during peak times. The Transportation Feasibility Study builds on several past efforts to examine the causes of congestion at Red Rock and will propose strategies to lessen congestion and identify possible funding sources available to support implementation of the selected alternative. We anticipate finalizing the feasibility study the summer of 2012 and signing the subsequent EA in 2013.
2. Red Rock is in the early stages of developing a prospectus to address open and available special recreation permit opportunities for hiking, bicycling, off-road vehicles and equestrian operations. We decided to issue a prospectus due to the limited number of permits available and we wanted all potential applicants to be provided with the



opportunity to apply. We anticipate making the prospectus available to the public during the summer of 2012.

3. The 13-Mile campground received some much needed upgrades this year. An additional vault toilet was installed for the group sites, the host sites were upgraded with solar panels and shade structures were installed at all sites.
4. The Red Rock Canyon Scenic Drive is a BLM National Scenic Backcountry Byway and traverses approximately 13 miles of the NCA with trailheads, scenic overlooks and picnic facilities along its route. This route is entirely under BLM management and is in moderate condition. It is in need of major repair in several locations where shoulders are non-existent and pavement is failing. The parking lots associated with the Scenic Drive



are severely inadequate for the traffic volume, vehicle sizes and frequency of use (addressed as a part of the transit feasibility study). Red Rock received approximately \$2.5 million through Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act (SNPLMA) to address the condition of the scenic drive and associated amenities. Review and validation of the environmental analysis completed for this project in 2007 is currently underway. A minor scope change has been submitted to the SNPLMA office to reduce the scope of the project to what can reasonably be completed with available funding and to remove items duplicated in other projects.

5. The Red Rock visitor center complex was dedicated on April 10, 2010 and remains in excellent condition. Of the 975,944 people who entered Red Rock through the entrance station, 358,555 of them visited the visitor center.

6. We began updating the current sign plan for Red Rock in fiscal year 2010. Funding was secured through SNPLMA to purchase portal signs and secondary signs. We were hoping to have the sign planned approved and signs installed this FY but were unable to do so. The actual signs have been procured through the national sign shop in WY and we have submitted the purchase request to have sign bases designed and built. We are waiting for that contract to be awarded. All signs will be installed in FY 2012.



7. Red Rock does not have a separate 5 year maintenance plan or backlog inventory. Maintenance has been a function shared with the District Office and this information has been collected for the entire District. We were able to fill a maintenance position which has contributed to the immediate responses to maintenance needs.

8. The NCA has more than 100 miles of known trails of various standards for hikers, rock climbers, horse riders, and mountain bikers. Inventorying of these routes has been put on hold pending development of a travel management plan. Maintenance on currently designated routes will continue to occur as needed.



III: Outreach, Environmental Education, interpretation and Volunteers

1. In partnership with the Red Rock Canyon Interpretative Association (RRCIA), Red Rock hosted a total of 921 educational/interpretative programs reaching 68,861 participants. 12 of which were Let's Move Outside events with 184 participants. We also began working with the RRCIA to develop a strategy for writing an interpretative plan for Red Rock.



Children participate in Let's Move Outside event at Red Rock

2. Vandalism of the Lost Creek cultural site gained national attention. It also caused the community of southern Nevada to rally against the continued decimation of cultural as well as other natural areas in Nevada. In partnership with RRCIA and Friends of Red Rock Canyon, the community of Southern Nevada donated approximately \$40,000 towards the restoration of Lost Creek. Following such a generous show of community

support, we decided to create a mobile interpretative display that tells the story of how the community pulled together in support of protecting our national treasures. The basic text has been developed and in cooperation with RRCIA, we hope to have the display finalized in 2012.

3. Red Rock became the first BLM site to have documented dinosaur tracksite in Nevada and is one of only a few sites known to contain dinosaur fossils in the state. We are working with regional paleontologists, UNLV professors and RRCIA to learn as much as we can from the tracks and use that information to develop interpretative materials.



Dinosaur tracks discovered at Red Rock



Participants getting ready for astronomy program

4. The current Jr. Ranger book in use by Red Rock is outdated and in need of an upgrade. Tremendous effort has gone towards working with RRCIA to create a Jr. Explorer book that provides interactive/fun ways for youth to learn about the Mojave Desert.
5. Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FORRC) continues to be the main provider of thousands of hours of volunteer labor and help with projects such as clean up events, major volunteer events, trail maintenance and graffiti removal activities. FORRC along with BLM and RRCIA had a total of 38,810 hours of volunteer labor in 2011. This equates to a total of \$828,981.16 of labor donated to the BLM.
6. A total of 212 youths donated 848 hours of work on various volunteer projects at Red Rock.



Volunteers trim vegetation along the scenic drive

IV: Science

1. RRCIA is partnering with West Career and Technical Academy to teach students how to collect, catalogue and identify insects at Red Rock.
2. In 2012 we plan to begin banding hummingbirds. The purpose is to assist in tracking migration patterns, life span and population numbers.
3. Fire management specialists have been in the process of trying to determine if black brush can be reestablished in previously burned areas.

V: Partnerships

1. The Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association continues to operate Elements, a book and gift shop in the visitor center, provide Interpretive Naturalists who conducts educational programs, hikes and other on and off-site interpretive activities on behalf of Red Rock in concert with the BLM environmental education staff. In 2011, RRCIA presented 558 interpretative programs to 40,211 participants. The increase in participants is due to BLM and RRCIA participating in the Clark County Science Festival. 5,000 contacts were made at that one event alone.



Students exploring nature

2. Friends of Red Rock Canyon continue to be a great partner to work with as well. Our visitor center information desk is staffed by member of FORRC. In FY 2011, they donated approximately 20,000 hours in service.

3. While RRCIA and FORRC are our primary partners we work with on a daily basis, we have a number of other partners who are just as valuable on a project by project basis. Partners such as Friends of Nevada Wilderness, Climbing Liaison Council, various user groups and adjacent communities to name a few, all contribute to the operations of Red Rock Canyon NCA.



Clark County Science Expo

VI: Planning and Business Practices

1. Responding the needs of climbers who have expressed a safety concern regarding our current policy against bolting in the wilderness, we have begun development of a Notice of Intent to amend the Resource Management Plan to consider allowing bolting in the wilderness.
2. The Red Rock business plan was approved in early 2010. This plan primarily focused on the core area of Red Rock where amenity fees are collected to maintain or improve services and facilities to our visitors. This business plan addressed a fee increase for all those accessing the scenic drive. FY 2011 projections for collections were estimated at \$2.1 million. Fees collected go largely to the operation and maintenance of the visitor center, administration building and maintaining facilities along the scenic drive, providing law enforcement and a number of planning efforts to improve or provide new facilities along the scenic drive where the public has informed us there is a need.
3. The Red Rock/Sloan Field Office consists of the two NCAs and Walking Box Ranch. There is a Field Manager and NCA Manager on site overseeing both units. Red Rock has four permanent, full-time Outdoor Recreation Planners and three Park Rangers. We share resource specialists, support services and law enforcement with other field offices. The overall operating budget for Red Rock in 2011 was \$2.5 million.

VII. Manager's Corner

Things continue to move in a positive direction for Red Rock. Our working relationships internally and externally continue to improve. We've hosted nearly a year of monthly open houses inviting the public to Red Rock to learn about ongoing operation successes and challenges, receive project updates and to just meet with the staff to have a face to put with a name. This has proven to be beneficial in showing our visiting public that we appreciate them taking an interest in Red Rock and we value their input. We've also shown that we really are trying to be as transparent as possible when conducting business and that we don't make decisions in a vacuum.

One challenge we face when managing Red Rock (or Sloan) is the need for a natural resource position (e.g. NRS). A source for additional funding or redirected funding for the position would first have to be identified in order to move forward with the District-State Office approval process. While utilizing resource specialists for project work has worked well, we lack the ability to make the collection of baseline information a priority. With the exception of having a cultural resource specialist, all of our staff falls within a recreation based field. It would be extremely helpful to have a Natural Resource Specialist on staff to assist with collecting and documenting trends as it relates to the natural resources of Red Rock.